

Regional
Services

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Ontario

Ministry
of the
Environment

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Minister

Everett Biggs
Deputy Minister

Southwestern Region



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INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment's role in this province is the overall protection of the natural environment to prevent degradation by man's activities.

To achieve this objective, four goals have been set: control over contaminant emission; establishment of environmental safeguards in planning; improved management of waste and water; and maintenance of restorative and enhancement measures.

The reorganization of the Ministry as of April 1, 1974, and the establishment of six regional areas in the province was undertaken with the sole purpose of decentralizing its services to bring them closer to the people they are intended to serve.

It is the Ministry's belief that only by maximizing the services rendered and by minimizing the inconvenience to the people it serves can Environment Ontario truly fulfill its mandate.

It is the Ministry's hope that future historians will judge our age by the manner in which we have protected and enhanced the environment of the Province of Ontario.

In principle the Regional Operations Division of the Ministry is responsible for policy implementation and the delivery of Ministry services. This includes environmental protection activities such as abatement programs and complaint investigations, regional environmental assessment activities and the operation of sewage and water projects.

THE STRUCTURE

Environment Ontario has divided service to the province into six geographic regions: Northwestern, with an office in Thunder Bay; Northeastern, with an office in Sudbury; Southwestern, with an office in London; West Central, with an office in Stoney Creek, near Hamilton; Central, with an office in (Don Mills) Metropolitan Toronto; and Southeastern, with an office in Kingston.

These regional headquarters are supplemented by district offices across the province.

The regional and district offices play a key role in making the Ministry more accessible to municipalities, the public and organizations which are concerned with its services.

Substantial responsibility and authority is delegated to the Regional Director and to the regional office. This office provides a strong base of administrative support and technical expertise to ensure the delivery of services within the region.

The environmental functions in the Region are carried out by five sections: Industrial Abatement; Municipal and Private Abatement; Technical Support (Environmental monitoring and planning); Utility Operation, and Laboratory Services.

A closer look at each of these sections provides a clear idea of what the Ministry does in servicing residents of each region.

INDUSTRIAL ABATEMENT

The Industrial Abatement Section in each of the Ministry's regional operations is responsible for the protection of the natural environment from emissions from many sources, for example, industrial processes, commercial, institutional and agricultural operations, construction and demolition activities, or from certain activities of individual citizens.

This section makes preliminary investigations into a wide range of environmental complaints, initiates abatement action and ensures that problems outside its jurisdiction are referred to the proper authority. It also provides information to industry and to the public on the current technology for controlling existing sources of pollution. If process changes are required when expansion is anticipated or when hazardous wastes need to be disposed, this section is responsible.

Industrial abatement staff conduct investigations into complaints of air, water and land contamination from all sources and identify possible infractions of The Environmental Protection Act, 1971, and its Regulations to establish appropriate abatement programs.

Similarly, abatement programs may result from routine industrial surveys. Such programs are normally established on a co-operative basis or at times through court action.

Where court action is necessary, the gathering of evidence may require many weeks of painstaking work involving direct observations by specially trained field personnel, the use of sophisticated monitoring devices or of soil, water or air sampling followed by physical and chemical analysis.

Responsibilities under the Air Pollution Index and Alert Systems include surveillance and appropriate action for Metropolitan Toronto, Hamilton, Sudbury, Welland, Niagara Falls and Windsor. Other activities of the section include the gathering of source data for the Metropolitan

Toronto emission inventory and mathematical model, on a continuing basis. It also provides on a regional basis, a 24-hour first-line engineering assessment and co-ordinating function under the Ontario Contingency Plan for transportation and other emergency spills.

In addition to contact with complainants and individuals responsible for emissions into the environment, industrial abatement activities include liaison with municipal, provincial and federal agencies including local fire, police, health, by-law enforcement and works departments, the Provincial Health and Labour Ministries and the Federal Ministry of Transportation.

MUNICIPAL AND PRIVATE ABATEMENT

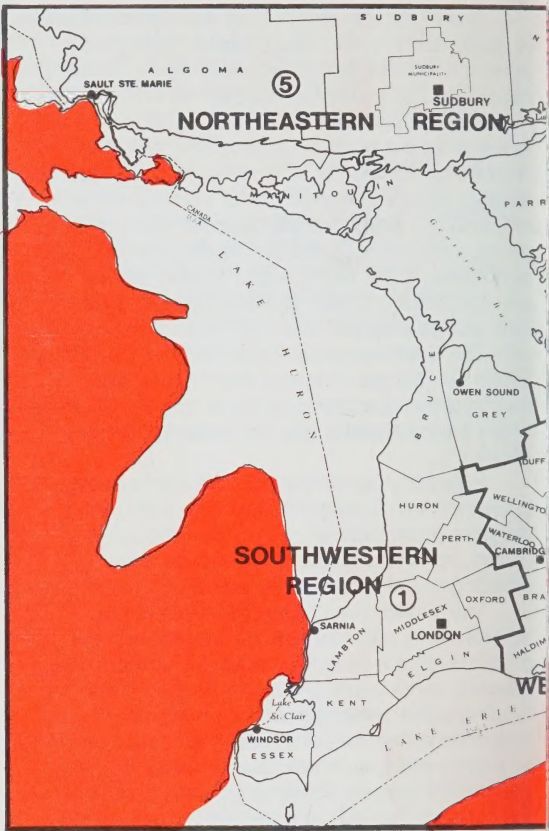
The Municipal and Private Abatement Section is responsible for the field program designed to enhance and protect the environment in matters relating to activities of municipalities and citizens.

Activities include surveys of liquid discharges to water for the purpose of detecting pollution emissions, surveys of land areas to locate litter and derelict vehicles, inspections of communal water and sewage works, waste disposal sites, marinas, boats, ice shelters, pesticide application (storage and sales), water wells, septic tank systems, sewage holding tanks, liquid sewage and septic tank sludge disposal sites to ensure compliance with The Environmental Protection and The Ontario Water Resources Acts and their regulations. Investigation of complaints regarding the protection of the environment is also attended to by this section.

Following the findings of pollution surveys, inspections and complaint reviews, a remedial program is undertaken, which includes issuing orders, reports, directions, control orders and initiating prosecutions as required.

The section also monitors inputs to the environment, such as sewage treatment plant effluents, provides technical advice to municipal officials, consultants and citizens on matters relating to the protection of the environment, and responds within the contingency plan framework to sewage overflows, breakdown in water supplies, and pesticide spills. Preliminary data to determine the cause of fish kills is collected by the section and it participates in the approval of waste disposal sites, sewage lagoons, sewage treatment plants and water works by conducting site inspections. Works under construction are inspected to ensure installation according to approved plans.

REGIONS AND OFFICES IN ONTARIO



Ontario

Ministry of the Environment

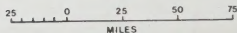
Regional Offices

■ TORONTO

District Offices

● SARNIA

Scale



UTILITY OPERATIONS

The main purpose of the Utility Operations Section is to provide water and waste water service to municipalities. When the construction of works financed by the province is substantially completed, the section assumes responsibility for the staffing, equipping, and continuing administration of the project. This work is accomplished through a regional staff of professional engineers, technologists, technicians, maintenance co-ordinators, plant superintendents and plant maintenance, laboratory operating, clerical and labour staff.

Utility operations staff is knowledgeable about plant and systems engineering and maintains close liaison with consulting engineers, equipment suppliers and Ministry personnel in associated disciplines. By these associations and the review of contract documents, pre-selection of equipment, maintenance of engineering records and the assistance provided to other Ministry bodies in preparing suitable terms of reference, some uniformity and reliability of service is provided to participating municipalities. The group provides information for budgeting and multi-year forecasts of all projects.

Standards of operation, sampling, maintenance, reporting and appearance are established. So also, quality control is provided by close supervision of plants and installation. Close co-operation with participating municipalities is obtained through the formation of local advisory committees.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The Technical Support Section is involved with monitoring and evaluating changes in the environment; co-ordinating regional environmental impact assessment statements; and evaluating the effectiveness of the Ministry's abatement programs.

Four sub-sections make up the working units: Planning and Approvals, Air Quality Assessment, Water Resources Assessment, and Laboratory.

The Planning and Approvals staff review official and subdivision plans, solicit comments from the abatement and assessment sections and co-ordinate comments about the Ministry's concerns for the possible effects of such plans on the environment.

The withdrawal of water from streams, lakes, ponds and wells is regulated by a permit program to ensure that withdrawals do not result in environmental degradation or in hardship to neighbouring water users.

Certificates of Approval are issued to regulate a wide variety of activities which are likely to affect the environment. Each application is reviewed by the Assessment staff and the comments are co-ordinated by Planning and Approvals to ensure that the activity described in each application would conform to comprehensive standards of the Ministry.

Approval certificates are also issued for the installation and operation of equipment emitting or discharging contaminants (gaseous, liquid or solid); for sewage and water treatment plants and systems; waste disposal sites; derelict motor vehicle sites and for other activities which affect the quality of the environment.

"Non-complex" approvals are assessed and issued by Regional staff; "complex" approvals are assessed by Regional or Head Office staff, or both, and issued by Head Office staff.

ASSESSMENT

The Air Quality Assessment sub-section is responsible for monitoring and assessing the quality of the ambient air in the region. It provides the "feed-back" loop for the air programs of the Industrial Abatement section.

This section operates an extensive network of sensors to obtain data on air pollutant concentrations and meteorological conditions. Special surveys are conducted to identify specific sources, determine whether they are in compliance with Ministry standards and criteria, and to provide air quality data for the preparation of impact assessment statements. New instrumentation and techniques to improve accuracy and sensitivity are continuously being developed and evaluated with the network being expanded to include new pollutants as they are identified.

Data collected is analysed and interpreted to define air pollution areas, to assess the effect of industries on air quality, to establish planning and zoning regulations, to assess the effectiveness of abatement programs, to determine air quality trends, and to help assess effects of air pollution on health and damage to vegetation and materials. The Air Pollution Index is used to restrict the emission of pollutants whenever the value exceeds set criteria.

Water Resources Assessment includes: monitoring the quality and quantity of water within the region, responding to complaints on water quality, preparing impact assessment statements, and undertaking resource assessment surveys of drainage basins and lakes.

A network of surface water and groundwater stations for determining the quantity and quality of water is maintained throughout the region and is expanded to meet development needs. A service to advise citizens on well drilling is also provided.

Experts within the section are equipped to deal with all aspects of water use. Physical, chemical and biological sampling and analyses are con-

ducted, impact of development on the quality and quantity of water is assessed, recommendations are made on what is required to minimize or correct degradation of the environment, and methods are developed and utilized to determine the amount and variability of streamflow and groundwater storage.

The province's new Environmental Assessment Act, 1975, is the legal legislation which enables the Ministry and its regional and district offices to conduct or require environmental impact studies on governmental, industrial or private projects that may have a bearing on the future quality of life in Ontario.

LABORATORIES

The Laboratory Services staff conducts water, air, soil and vegetation analyses that are used to assess the quality of the environment. Analytical services provided include: micro-biological analyses of samples from the aquatic environment, chemical analyses for standard quality parameters from the aquatic environment, chemical analyses on environmental samples for trace inorganic and organic constituents, and chemical and physical analyses on air constituents and vegetation samples.

Surveillance programs on provincial water supply systems, determination of type and level of pollution from waste discharges, and recommendations for specific remedial action to meet objectives are also a responsibility of the laboratory staff.

Service is provided by the main Laboratory in Toronto for the Central, West Central, and Northeastern Regions. Regional laboratories exist in Thunder Bay for the Northwest, London for the Southwest, and Kingston for the Southeastern areas of the province.

CONCLUSION

Thus the Ontario Ministry of the Environment has decentralized and regionalized to better serve the province. Bringing Ministry programs closer to the people, providing door-step consultation through regional and district offices facilitates citizen involvement in environmental concerns and accelerates the Ministry's response to these concerns.

Should an environmental problem or concern develop in your community, be it municipal, industrial or individual, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's regional and district offices are there to serve and service.

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